DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 252 257 JC 850 019

AUTHOR Farland, Ronnald W.
TITLE Proposals for Strengthening the Associate Degree in the California Community Colleges.
INSTITUTION California Community Colleges, Sacramento. Office of the Chancellor.
PUB DATE Jan 85
NOTE 26p.; Discussed as Agenda Item 1 at a Meeting of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges (Sacramento, CA, January 24-25, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Standards; *Associate Degrees; *Community Colleges; Credit Courses; *Degree Requirements; Educational Change; *Educational Quality; Program Improvement; *Statewide Planning; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *California

ABSTRACT

Developed by the Task Force on Academic Quality for the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, this report analyzes, discusses, and offers recommendations concerning ways to strengthen the quality of the associate degree in the state's community college system. Part I provides background on the charge of the Task Force and external influences on the scope of its deliberations. Part II provides a history of the associate degree from 1900; examines the current status of the associate degree nationally and in California; reviews prior actions taken by officials of the California community colleges concerning the integrity of the associate degree; and discusses factors affecting the number and quality of the associate degrees awarded in the state. Part III presents a proposal to amend Title 5 of the Education Code to ensure that courses applied to the associate degree are of sufficient academic rigor and are distinguishable from courses not applicable to the degree. This section also includes a preliminary discussion of issues that suggest a need to redefine the associate degree and recommendations that the Board of Governors initiate an examination of the need for redefining or restructuring the degree and that they encourage efforts to promote articulation among the state's community colleges and other educational segments. Appendices present existing minimum requirements for the associate degree, a policy statement from the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, and a list of task force members. (HB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED252257

PROPOSALS FOR STRENGTHENING THE ASSOCIATE DEGREE IN THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Ronnald W. Farland
Administrator
Special Projects
Office of the Chancellor
California Community Colleges

Discussed as Agenda Item 1 at a Meeting of the
Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges
Sacramento, California
January 24-25, 1985

TC 850 019

Board of Governors of the
California Community Colleges
January 24-25, 1985

Item 1

Title: Proposals for Strengthening the Associate Degree in the California Community Colleges

Staff Presentation: Ronnald W. Farland, Administrator
Special Projects

Summary

This item is a report to the Chancellor from the Task Force on Academic Quality which recommends actions to strengthen the quality of the associate degree. In addition to being reviewed by the Board as information, it is being distributed to the districts for review and comment. It is anticipated that staff analysis and recommendations will be brought to the Board for information in April and action in May 1985. The Task Force report includes:

1. a history of the associate degree since its creation in 1900;

2. presentation and comment on findings from a national study which indicate the major issues related to the viability of the degree;

3. a description of the existing requirements for the degree in California and prior Board actions to strengthen the degree;

4. a proposal to amend Title 5 regulations to assure that courses granted credit toward the degree are of sufficient rigor and are distinguished from courses that do not apply to the degree. This action would have the additional effect of eliminating remedial courses from eligibility for degree credit;

5. a preliminary discussion of issues that suggest a need to redefine an associate degree or degrees and a recommendation that activities be undertaken to further examine that need and report to the Board by December 1985.

BEST COPY

PREFACE FROM THE CHANCELLOR

The text included in this item was prepared to represent the advice of the Task Force on Academic Quality to the Chancellor in response to that part of its charge concerning strengthening the associate degree. Normally, advisory group recommendations are analyzed and used as references by staff as it develops recommended actions for the Board. In this case, however, the scope and complexity of the issues addressed deserves not only additional review by and comment from the colleges but also a comparable period of deliberation by the Board itself. For that reason, I am sharing the Task Force's report with the Board in its present form for information at this time, and have directed staff to distribute it widely among community college constituents and to seek further review and comment before I recommend Board action. Staff analysis and recommendations will be brought to the Board for information in April, and I propose that action be taken in May, 1985.

BEST COPY

I. BACKGROUND

When, in April 1983, the Chancellor appointed the Task Force on Academic Quality, the scope of its deliberations was described in a "Prospectus" as including three broad tasks: 1) to develop a model student matriculation process; 2) to suggest responses to the California Postsecondary Education Commission's report on remediation ("Promises to Keep") and make recommendations about the future of remediation in community colleges; and 3) to recommend standards of "academic rigor" for courses applicable to the associate and baccalaureate degrees. In April 1984, the Board approved the student matriculation Plan and is currently seeking funding for its implementation in the 1985 California State Budget. On its agenda today, the Board is also reviewing recommendations of the Task Force regarding remediation in community colleges. This item, then, deals with the third general area of concern -- standards for associate and baccalaureate degree courses; but its scope goes well beyond what was conceived in the original language of the Task Force's "prospectus."

At the outset, the subject of academic rigor was viewed by staff and members of the Task Force as having important and far-reaching implications for the quality of education in community colleges. At the same time, however, it was thought to be the least time consuming of the three task areas because it was conceived as simply reviewing and reaching consensus on two pieces of work that had already begun in other arenas. The first of these was a draft of proposed new Title 5 language, developed jointly by the Academic Senate and the Chief Instructional Officers, that would set out criteria to be used in determining whether a course meets the standards of "rigor" that would permit it to be applicable to the associate degree. The second was a joint commitment by the Chancellors of the California Community Colleges and the California State University to encourage their respective faculty senates to work together to develop a common definition and/or standards for determining what courses ought to be applicable to the baccalaureate degree. As will be seen in the remainder of this item, those two efforts have remained central to the work of the Task Force and constitute the basis for the key recommendations to the Chancellor in this item. But, during the course of its deliberations on these and the other issues within its charge, the Task Force acknowledged that any discussion of the "academic rigor" of degree-applicable courses must occur in the context of broader concerns about the nature, value and structure of the associate degree itself, as well as the relationship of the associate degree to the baccalaureate degree. Several factors were instrumental in bringing about this change of perspective and scope.

First, concurrent with the convening of the Task Force on Academic Quality, the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges established a National Task Force on the Redefinition of the Associate Degree. That group released a preliminary statement in Summer 1983, and a more comprehensive report in July 1984, which culminated in August 1984 in a "Policy Statement on the Associate Degree" approved by the AACJC Board. These actions by the Association made clear that the value and quality of the degree are concerns that are national in scope. (See Appendix B.)

BEST COPY

Second, the Board of Governors, in its April 1984 review of a progress report on the Task Force's work in this area, raised questions which indicated that it was eager to receive Task Force comment on the nature and value of the degree-granting function in community colleges as well as on the standards of rigor that should pertain in courses that apply to the degree.

Third, state level public policy discussions during the 1984 session of the Legislature suggested that there is widespread confusion about the mission of community colleges in general and concern about the vitality of the transfer and degree-granting functions in particular. In its 1984 Basic Agenda, the Board declared its concern for enhancing the transfer and vocational education functions as its highest priority. The Legislature mandated studies of the Master Plan for Higher Education with a particular emphasis on the community college mission. The Postsecondary Education Commission established a special Ad Hoc Committee on Community College Transfer, and its recently-released draft report makes clear that part of the so-called "transfer issue" derives from complex differences, among and within the educational segments, about the extent to which degree courses and programs in community colleges are or should be congruent with lower division offerings in the baccalaureate segments. Finally, in its 1985 Basic Agenda, the Board has called for the development of policy reforms to strengthen the meaning and integrity of the associate degree -- as a means of promoting excellence in community college programs.

For all of these and other reasons, the Task Force extended both the time and the scope of its deliberations to examine, in addition to its original charge, the evolution and purposes of the associate degree in an historical context, the nature and structure of the degree and its award in California and, in a preliminary way, whether there may be a need to redefine or restructure one or more associate degree patterns that are compatible with the major functions of the colleges and that are more meaningful to the citizens who pursue them.

II. THE ASSOCIATE DEGREE

A. A Historical View

As the AACJC report, Redefining the Associate Degree, points out, "Any understanding of the associate degree as it now exists must be grounded in an awareness of its evolution throughout this century."[1] Unlike the baccalaureate, masters and doctor of philosophy degrees, whose purposes and structures have evolved over centuries, the associate degree was first awarded in 1900 by the University of Chicago. Its award at that time signified the successful completion of what we have today come to refer to as lower division, breadth or general collegiate education.

According to the National Task Force report, the creation of the associate degree at Chicago was closely linked to the establishing of Joliet Junior College, the first forerunner of today's community

colleges. Shortly thereafter, with impetus from David Starr Jordan and Stanford University, Fresno City College was founded as the first institution with similar purposes in California. From their inception, Joliet, Fresno and the other earliest "junior colleges" included curricula for technical and vocational training; but their dominant function was the provision of lower division college work; and for that the associate degree was awarded.

During the 1920's, 30's and 40's, there was a notable increase in the proportion of the curriculum devoted to vocational or, as it was then called, "terminal" education, as the junior colleges increasingly assumed responsibility for the education previously provided by "trade schools." In 1947 the President's Commission on Higher Education recommended "an increase in the number of community colleges so that students who might not benefit from a full four-year course of studies could attain an education enabling them to take their place in the American workforce." The Commission spoke specifically of programs enabling graduates to enter skilled, semi-professional and technical jobs.[2]

Neither the National Task Force report nor the other literature sources consulted by the Task Force indicate just when or to what extent the practice of awarding associate degrees for work in fields other than the traditional university disciplines began; but it seems likely that it must have become fairly commonplace during the 1930's, since a 1939 national study found that "nonacademic or vocational programs... accounted for about one third of the courses offered at the approximately 200 junior colleges then in existence."[3]

But whatever diversification of the nature, scope and/or purposes of the associate degree had occurred prior to the end of World War II, it was quite likely minor compared to the changes that occurred in the following three decades from 1945 to 1975. For it was in this period that the nation, in the context of unprecedented economic expansion, a phenomenal post-war "baby boom" and major breakthroughs in civil and human rights, embraced the related concepts of "universal higher education" and "lifelong learning." And perhaps the most significant element of that commitment was the amazingly rapid expansion, spearheaded by California, both of the number of community colleges and of the scope of their constituencies and their functions.

According to the most recent major analysis of The American Community College, "...of all higher education institutions, the community college contributed most to opening up the system" and "were available to all comers, attracting the 'new students,' the minorities, the women, the people who had done poorly in high school, those who would otherwise never have considered further education."[4] And, while it is simplistic and possibly misleading to draw direct, "cause-effect" relationships, this diversification of student constituencies and expansion of size and number was accompanied by significant shifts in curricula and patterns of enrollment

BEST COPY

which undoubtedly, in turn, affected the nature, structure and public image of associate degree programs. It may also be important to note that while these expansive tendencies and their effects were observed in all segments of higher education, the open door mission of community colleges made the changes particularly pronounced.

Among these changes cited in the National Task Force report are:

1. By 1973, 60% of two year colleges in the nation reported that they provided remedial education and by the mid-1970's one third of the math courses taught were at a level lower than elementary algebra;

2. Part-time enrollments increased dramatically;

3. By the end of the 1970's only one in every five students completed two years of work, allowing the Postsecondary Education Commission to report, in 1976, that "...continuing education for part-time adult students has become the dominant function of community colleges..."; and

4. The numbers of associate degrees awarded in vocational and technical fields increased dramatically, while the numbers in arts, sciences and general education held steady, at best, even during a period of rapid overall enrollment increases.

Beyond whatever modifications of associate degree patterns or requirements may have been stimulated by these developments, the degree granting function itself -- which, it should be remembered, was never the sole function of two-year colleges -- became only one of several benefits that colleges provided their diverse student constituencies.

B. The Current Status of the Associate Degree

1. The National Perspective

The very fact that there was established a National Task Force on the Redefinition of the Associate Degree speaks to the fact that the nature, purpose and value of that degree, as it currently exists, are being questioned. Among the many facts and findings presented in that Task Force's report are several which suggest why this is the case. Some that the Task Force on Academic Quality views as particularly noteworthy are:

a. "The traditional prestige of the associate degree is not among its strongest advantages. [Nowadays] the degree is more appreciated in career preparation and personal development, especially by those students who need a sense of...accomplishment."[5]

BEST COPY

b. "...the degree's monetary potential and job insurance were not witnessed by the [survey responses] of participating companies."[6] (NOTE: The Task Force on Academic Quality suggests that in some job fields and some geographic locations, potential employers do value the degree, but that generally the National survey finding is correct.)

c. There has been a proliferation of degree titles and variations with little understanding of the distinctions implied. This is confusing to senior colleges, potential employers and the general public. "The associate degree definition is fragmented or non-existent in most of the surveyed colleges."[7]

d. "There is such variation in subject area and unit requirements that universities and colleges prefer their own transfer requirements rather than accept the associate degree as qualifying students for transfer."[8]

e. "...more than half of the respondent colleges...would like to see more vigor in educational offerings, particularly in general education, as well as more structure in curriculum with more coursework and more specificity in degree designation."[9]

2. The Associate Degree in California

In California, Education Code Section 66701 authorizes community colleges to award the "associate in arts" and "associate in science" degrees. The Administrative Code, Title 5, Section 55806, in turn, contains Board-established regulations which set out for districts the minimum statewide requirements for those degrees. These requirements include:

a) demonstrated competence in reading, written expression and mathematics;

b) completion of at least 60 semester units (90 quarter units), including,

   1. at least 18 (27) units in a major,

   2. at least 18 (27) units in General Education, with further minimum units specified in discipline areas (See Appendix A for full detail); and

   3. the balance of units in electives.

Colleges may, and some do, exceed these minimum requirements in various ways and to varying degrees.

Thus, while the Education Code has prohibited in California the proliferation of degree titles that has occurred elsewhere, the broadly stated minimum degree requirements have permitted the

same structural variability within those titles and has, therefore, subjected the degree to the same credibility problems as are cited in the National Task Force's report.

Prior Actions

Concern for the integrity of the degree in the California Community Colleges is not new. Even the current legal parameters for the degree are stronger than existed earlier, as a result of actions taken in the past few years.

After a lengthy period of study and deliberation by representatives from the colleges, the Board of Governors approved a revised general education component of the associate degree which increased from 15 to 18 the number of units required. Later, the Board established policy that effective July 1, 1983, (Title 5, Section 55806, attached as Appendix A) students receiving associate degrees must demonstrate competencies in reading, writing and mathematics.

About the same time, a joint committee of the Academic Senate and the Chief Instructional Officers studied the issue of degree-appropriate courses and distributed a report which proposed limiting Associate degree credit to English courses not more than one level below the traditional freshman English courses and to mathematics courses above and including Intermediate Algebra. The report was submitted to the Chancellor and has been a valuable source document for the Task Force on Academic Quality.

In addition to strengthening the general education requirements for the associate degree, the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, in October, 1983, adopted a series of revisions to Section 55002 of Title 5 which were designed to strengthen the minimum standards for a credit course.

A further revision of Title 5, in October, 1983, added Section 55182 which specifies the circumstances under which avocational, recreational, and personal development courses, deleted in accordance with the legislative mandate contained in the Budget Act of 1982 may be reinstated as credit courses in the curriculum. The deletion of those courses also served to strengthen the associate degree in the community colleges.

These actions, together with those additional ones proposed in this report, are all expressions of a renewed concern for academic excellence and the integrity of the associate degree in California. Still, there are important issues yet to be addressed.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Current Issues

Data submitted by the districts to CPEC indicate that, in 1982, 58,788 associate degrees were awarded in the California Community Colleges. Of these, about 45% were awarded to males and about 55% to females. Eighteen percent were awarded in Business and Commerce Technologies, 12% in Health and Paramedical Technologies, 10% in Mechanical and Engineering Technologies, 7% in Public Service Related Techologies and about 3% each in Natural Science Technologies and Data Processing. The remaining 47% were reported in the category "Unspecified," which includes majors in tne traditional liberal arts disciplines as well as in what is commonly known as "General Studies."

The fact that the number of degrees awarded is small in comparison to the total enrollment in a given year is sometimes cited as a reason for concern about the viability of the degree. The Task Force on Academic Quality hopes that the recommendations for strengthening the degree contained in this report will result in a larger number of students desiring to attain it. At the same time, the Task Force takes the position that, under current legal parameters, the quality or viability of the degree should not be judged by the number awarded. Rather, the viability of the degree should be judged in light of other major factors which affect the number and quality that are awarded.

First, in California the degree itself is not transferable; rather, it is most of the courses that comprise the degree that transfer (that is, those courses certified to the CSU or approved by the UC as "baccalaureate appropriate"). Therefore, many students who intend to transfer complete as many transferable units as are required (or as they desire, in the case of students who were UC/CSU-eligible as entering freshmen), and leave the community college for the baccalaureate institution. In many cases, such students have completed all but one or two courses necessary for completion of the associate degree. In some cases, students may even have completed all associate degree requirements, but simply do not apply for the award of the degree.

Second, and similarly, occupational students also have alternative options to earning the associate degree. Many occupational fields offer the Certificate of Achievement for successful completion of work in the major, with lesser or no general education requirements. Still other students complete only as many courses in the field as needed to secure, maintain or upgrade employment.

Third, the recent Field Corporation survey results indicate that about 22.5% of community college students are enrolled primarily to develop basic skills or for reasons other than transfer or vocational preparation. Few of these students

BEST COPY

aspire to earn a degree. In addition, a majority of the 18% who say their educational purpose is to upgrade skills on their present job probably are not seeking a degree.

To whom, then, are the tens of thousands of associate degrees awarded each year? Again, a precise response to the question is prohibited by a lack of uniform data at the state level. The collective observations of Task Force members suggest, though, that the following hypotheses would hold up under study:

1. The greatest proportion of degree recipients -- at least a majority -- are students who do, in fact, transfer or enter work in an occupational field, despite the fact that they have the alternatives noted above. The incidence of degree completion is especially high in those occupational fields, such as nursing, where there exist clear professional standards or licensure requirements, or such as paraprofessional or drafting, where there is occupational acceptance of the degree as a minimum qualification.

2. A significant proportion of degree recipients, who may or may not intend to use the degree to secure employment or to transfer its courses, value the degree chiefly as a sign of personal development or accomplishment. This is, perhaps, particularly true of students who are the first in their families to attend college or to earn a degree.

III. PROPOSALS FOR STRENGTHENING THE ASSOCIATE DEGREE

A. Standards of Rigor for Courses

As noted in the Background section of this item, the Task Force on Academic Quality began its work in this area with a conviction that the single most effective way to strengthen the associate degree would be to establish in regulation standards or criteria to assure that courses which are applied to the degree are taught with a level of "academic rigor" appropriate to the degree. The criteria, shown below under Recommendation 1, should be viewed as standards to be used by instructors in planning their courses and in communicating to enrolled students their expectations for student performance, and by colleges in their curriculum development and evaluation procedures. In addition, the proposed regulation changes state, in terms of curriculum structure, which courses are and are not applicable to the degree.

If the academic rigor criteria and the structural definition for an associate degree-appropriate course are adopted as recommended, many courses, chiefly in the remedial area, which have previously applied to the associate degree will no longer do so. Some would argue that such courses should be offered as noncredit courses. However, there

BEST COPY

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

are at least four major reasons why they should continue to be offered for credit, even though they would not satisfy degree or certificate requirements.

First, enrollment in a credit course requires that grades be given and that academic progress be monitored, whereas noncredit enrollment does not. Monitoring results in an improved opportunity to assist students through academic difficulties as well as to place them on probation or dismiss them if that is appropriate. Second, teaching in the credit mode, including remediation, already legally requires a higher level of rigor in course conduct than is true of noncredit courses. The additional regulatory clarification proposed in this item would further assure that the awarding of credit for remediation is justified. Third, the open access policy in community colleges enables many students to enroll who have degree, certificate or transfer objectives, but who, at entrance, lack the basic language and computational skills to succeed in degree applicable courses. For such students, remedial courses are the essential first step in completing an educational goal. Finally, these same students often need financial aid, or veteran or social security benefits to attend college; and, since noncredit courses do not normally qualify a student for such benefits, many would not be able to avail themselves of postsecondary opportunities.

For these reasons, the proposed regulation modifications under Recommendation 1 also include language for "Credit Courses Which Do Not Apply to the Associate Degree." A California precedent for this distinction already exists in the CSU's designation of "workload credit" for its remedial courses.

Therefore, the Task Force urges the Chancellor to recommend that the Board adopt the following:

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Board should adopt the modifications of Title 5, Section 55002, as shown below, with the understanding that, should other recommendations in this report result in changes in the title(s) or requirements for the associate degree(s), there may be a need to further amend Section 55002 at a later date.

55002. Standards and Criteria for Courses and Classes.
(a) A credit course is a course which, at a minimum:
(1) Is recommended by the responsible college officials and the academic senate or other appropriate faculty body as being of appropriate academic rigor and has been approved by the local district governing board as a collegiate course meeting the needs of the students eligible for admission.
(2) Is taught by a credentialed instructor.
(3) Is offered as described in an outline and/or curriculum guide in official files. That outline and/or curriculum guide shall specify the unit value, scope, objectives, content in terms of a specific body of knowledge, appropriate readings and writing, and outside assignments,

instructional methodology and methods of evaluation for determining whether the stated objectives have been met by students.

(4) Is taught in accordance with a set of instructional objectives common to all students.

(5) Provides for measurement of student performance in terms of the stated course objectives and culminates in a formal recorded grade based upon uniform standards in accordance with Section 55758 of this part and which is permanently recorded as an evaluation of student performance.

(6) Grants units of credit based upon a specified relationship between the number of units assigned to the course and the number of lecture and/or laboratory hours of performance criteria specified in the course outline.

(7) Shall require the completion of appropriate prerequisites for the course before students are enrolled.

(8) Allows repeated enrollment only as permitted by provisions of Division 2 (commencing with Section 51000 Sections 55761-55763 and 58161 of this part).

(b) An associate degree credit course conforms to standards of academic rigor when it:

(1) Meets all the requirements of subsection (a) of this section.

(2) Treats subject matter with an intensity that has an expectation for learner independence that is appropriate for a college course.

(3) Requires appropriate entrance skills and consequent prerequisites.

(4) Requires the ability to think critically and to understand and apply concepts in order to participate in the course.

(5) Requires learning skills and a vocabulary appropriate for a college course.

(6) Requires the use of college level educational materials.

(7) Requires a minimum of three hours of work per week including class time for each unit of credit and prorated for short term, lab and activity courses.

(8) Bases grades on demonstrated proficiency in subject matter determined by multiple measurement for evaluation.

(9) Has examinations, including essays and/or, where appropriate, uses appropriate symbol systems and/or skills demonstrations by students.

(10) Requires degree level prerequisites in English and mathematics where such skill levels are necessary for success as determined by the local board of trustees.

(c) Associate degree appropriate courses, as determined by the local board of trustees:

(1) Conform to the standards of academic rigor contained in subsection (b) of this section.

(2) Include all lower division courses at the baccalaureate level.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

(3) Include English courses not more than one level below English 1A.

(4) Includes all mathematics courses above and including Elementary Algebra.

(5) Include credit courses in English and mathematics which, as determined by the local board of trustees, require entrance skills at a level equivalent to those necessary for associate degree courses in English and mathematics.

(d) Credit Courses Which Do Not Apply to the Associate Degree. The local board of trustees may designate selected credit courses which meet all the re- quirements of subsection (a) of this part as courses which do not apply to the Associate degree or to Certificates of Achievement.

(e) A noncredit course is a course which, at a minimum:

(1) Is approved by the local district governing board as a course meeting the educational needs of the enrolled students.

(2) Is taught by a credentialed instructor. A supplementary lecturer need not hold a credential if he or she lectures fewer than four times in a semester or quarter.

(3) Treats subject matter and uses resource materials, teaching methods, and standards of attendance and achievement appropriate for the enrolled students.

(4) Is conducted in accordance with a course outline and/or curriculum guide in official college files. That outline and/or curriculum guide shall specify the scope, objectives, content, instructional methodology, and methods of evaluation for determining whether the course objectives have been met.

(f) A community services class at a minimum:

(1) Is approved by the local district governing board.

(2) Is designed for the physical, mental, moral, economic, or civic development of persons enrolled therein.

(3) Provides subject matter content, resource materials, and teaching methods appropriate for the enrolled students.

(4) Is conducted in accordance with a predetermined strategy or plan.

B. Rethinking the Associate Degree Itself

While that the action proposed above is believed by the Task Force to be the single best way to strenghen the credibility of the associate degree, it is also acknowledged that there are additional actions that could be taken to initiate near-term resolution of those issues. Among the issues to be addressed are the following:

1. Associate degree requirements, even in colleges that exceed the statewide minimums, do not comport with lower division transfer requirements of the University and State University. While all

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

lower division baccalaureate level courses normally apply to the associate degree, not all associate degree courses are acceptable in transfer. In large measure, this problem is due to the variability of lower division requirements of the campuses in the senior segments themselves. At the same time, it is also true that the community college curriculum includes a number of courses, many of which apply to the associate degree but which have no counterparts in the lower division curricula of the CSU or UC. This is confusing to many -- especially in light of the historic origins of the associate degree -- and can result in transfer-oriented students wasting credit on non-applicable courses. For these reasons and others, a growing number of people support the creation of an associate degree that is specially designed to assure transfer of all credits.

2. Existing state-level associate degree requirements are the same for occupational majors as for majors in the traditional university disciplines. In actuality, the occupational fields and their respective curricula vary greatly, not only from the traditional disciplines but from one another. Some have baccalaureate level program counterparts and others do not. Some require extensive coursework in the major (well beyond the 18-unit minimum) to reach something comparable to entry-level competence, while in others competence can be attained fairly quickly. For some fields the skills and knowledges associated with general education are vitally important to maintaining employability, while in others the general education aspect is relevant largely for its personal value. This variability is exacerbated often by the fact that potential employers in the fields have not established clear statements of expected job competencies.

   Again, a growing number of people take the position that this variability can best be accommodated by the creation of a distinctive, vocational associate degree. Some would accommodate the diversity among occupational fields by permitting "internal" variability in the degree's major and general education requirements. Others would prefer uniform requirements, even though setting the standards high enough for technological fields might result in requirements for other fields that are unnecessary or not feasible.

   Still others, in contrast, oppose the idea altogether, and suggest that a separate degree of any kind would inevitably lead to a public perception that such a degree is "second class."

3. With or without the creating of distinctive degrees for transfer and/or occupational purposes, there are many who think that there still would be need for an associate degree pattern that would not necessarily signify eligibility either for upper division baccalaureate work or for specific employment but would signify the completion of a structured program of studies and the attainment of competencies at the collegiate level; a

"solid" general education, if you will. Those who hold this view tend to point out that it is unrealistic to expect that a significant portion of the students already enrolled in community colleges would ever earn degrees if those degrees were "upgraded" beyond their attainable skills levels or personal needs. There is value for society, they argue, in providing a symbol of attainment beyond high school for that significant portion of the population who do not or cannot aspire to seek a baccalaureate degree or specialized employment.

Recognizing that these and other issues regarding the purposes and structures of the associate degree are real and important to the viability of the degree, but unable at this time to reach consensus on specific proposals for redefining a degree or degrees, the Task Force on Academic Quality proposes that the Chancellor recommend that the Board adopt the following recommendations, which are intended to bring resolution in the near-term.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Board should direct the Chancellor, with appropriate consultation with the colleges, to examine the need for redefining or restructuring an associate degree or degrees in California and report findings and recommendations to the Board by December 1985. The "Policy Statement on the Associate Degree" adopted by the American Associate of Community and Junior Colleges should be used as the resource in this examination. (See Appendix B.)

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Board should direct the Chancellor to encourage community colleges to: a) continue or initiate collaborative efforts with nearby campuses of the University and State University to develop joint, lower division "transfer programs," satisfactory completion of which would assure transfer at the junior level, and b) continue to develop, in conjunction with high schools and the business-industry community, articulated programs in occupational areas. Both types of efforts should be reported to the Chancellor for use in considering both whether there is a need to redefine or restructure an associate degree or degrees and, if so, what forms would be most appropriate.

BEST COPY

FOOTNOTES

1 Koltai, Leslie. Redefining the Associate Degree. A Report of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, Washington, D.C.; July, 1984, p. 3.

2 Ibid., p. 3.

3 Ibid., p. 4.

4 Cohen, Arthur M., and Florence B. Brawer. The American Community College. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982, p. 19.

5 Koltai, op. cit., p. 17.

6 Ibid., p. 17.

7 Ibid., p. 18.

8 Ibid., p. 17.

9 Ibid., p. 18.

BEST COPY

55806. Minimum Requirements for the Associate Degree (Applicable July 1, 1983).

The governing board of a commuunity college district shall confer the degree of Associate in Arts or Associate in Science upon a student who has demonstrated competence in reading, in written expression, and in mathematics, and who has satisfactorily completed at least 60 semester units or 90 quarter units of college work. This course work requirement must be fulfilled in a curriculum accepted toward the degree by a college within the district (as shown in its catalog). It must include at least 18 semester or 27 quarter units in General Education and at least 18 semester or 27 quarter units in a major as prescribed in this section. Of the required units, at least 12 semester or 18 quarter units must be completed in residence at the college granting the degree. Exceptions to residence requirements for the Associate Degree may be made by the governing board when it determines that an injustice or undue hardship would be placed on the student.

(a) Major Requirements. At least 18 semester or 27 quarter units of study taken in a single discipline or related disciplines, as listed in the Community Colleges "Taxonomy of Programs," shall be required.

(b) General Education Requirements.

(1) Students receiving an Associate Degree shall complete a minimum of 18 semester or 27 quarter units of general education, including a minimum of three semester or four quarter units in each of the areas (A), (B) and (C) and the same minimum in each part of (D). The remainder of the unit requirement is also to be selected from among these four divisions of learning or as determined by local option:

(A) Natural Sciences. Courses in the natural sciences are those which examine the physical universe, its life forms, and its natural phenomena. To satisfy the General Education Requirement in natural sciences, a course shall be designed to help the student develop an appreciation and understanding of the scientific method, and encourage an understanding of the relationships between science and other human activities. This category would include introductory or integrative courses in astronomy, biology, chemistry, general physical science, geology, meteorology, oceanography, physical geography, physical anthropology, physics and other scientific disciplines.

(B) Social and Behavioral Sciences. Courses in the social and behavioral sciences are those which focus on people as members of society. To satisfy the general education requirement in social and behavioral sciences, a course shall be designed to develop an awareness of the method of inquiry used by the social and behavioral sciences. It shall be designed to stimulate critical thinking about the ways people act and have acted in response to their societies and should promote appreciation of how societies and social subgroups operate. This category would include introductory or integrative survey courses in cultural anthropology, cultural geography, economics, history, political science, psychology, sociology and related disciplines.

(C) Humanities. Courses in the humanities are those which study the cultural activities and artistic expressions of human beings. To satisfy the general education requirement in the humanities, a course shall be designed to help the student develop an awareness of the ways in which people throughout the ages and in different cultures have responded to themselves and the world around them in artistic and cultural creation and help the student develop aesthetic understanding and an ability to make value judgments. Such courses

BEST COPY

could include introductory or integrative courses in the arts, foreign languages, literature, philosophy, and religion.

(D) Language and Rationality. Courses in language and rationality are those which develop for the student the principles and applications of language toward logical thought, clear and precise expression and critical evaluation of communication in whatever symbol system the student uses.

1. English Composition. Courses fulfilling the written composition requirement shall be designed to include both expository and argumentative writing.

2. Communication and Analytical Thinking. Courses fulfilling the communication and analytical thinking requirement include oral communication, mathematics, logic, statistics, computer languages and programming, and related disciplines.

(2) While a course might satisfy more than one general education requirement, it may not be counted more than once for these purposes. A course may be used to satisfy both a general education requirement and a major requirement. Whether it may be counted again for a different degree requirement is a matter for each college to determine. Students may use the same course to meet a general education requirement for the Associate Degree and to partially satisfy a general education requirement at the California State University, if such course is eligible under the provisions of Section 40405 of this title.

(3) Ethnic Studies will be offered in at least one of the required areas.

(c) The provisions of this section shall be applicable to all students who enter a community college on or after July 1, 1983, provided that a governing board may specify an earlier implementation date pursuant to subsection (b) of Section 55810.

APPENDIX B

POLICY STATEMENT ON THE ASSOCIATE DEGREE
(Reprinted from a Policy Brief of the
American Association of Community and Junior Colleges)
July 1984

The Associate Degree

The associate degree program is hereby reaffirmed as central to the mission of the community, technical, and junior college. The associate degree reflects the larger goals of educational attainment the institution holds for its students. It is a means through which the institution develops and maintains integrity in its educational programs. When appropriately defined, the associate degree becomes an integrating force for the institution, serves as an important student guide, and requires commitment on the part of the student for program completion.

Emphasis on the associate degree program indicates to faculty, administrators, students, and society that the community, technical, and junior college has a vision of what it means to be an educated person and affirms the college's commitment to program continuity, coherence and completion. The associate degree must indicate that the holder has developed proficiencies sufficient to prepare for upper-division collegiate work, or to enter directly into a specific occupation with confidence. The degree should be awarded only for completion of a coherent program of study designed for a specific purpose.

The Responsibility for Quality

The institution offering an associate degree assumes a responsibility to students and the public to establish and maintain excellence in all educational programs. In offering such a degree program, the individual institution recognizes the obligation to certify that the student receiving the degree has indeed attained associate degree levels of achievement. When an institution awards the associate degree it is providing the individual with the currency to negotiate the next step, whether that step be into fulltime employment or into a baaccalaureate degree program. The associate degree should be recognized by employers and baccalaureate degree granting institutions as the best indication that a student has attained the knowledge and skills necessary to enter a field of work or an upper division college program.

Quality community, technical, and junior colleges demand substantial investments, and the investments return great dividends to individuals and to our nation. Because of the investment required to build and maintain a quality program, the institution has a professional obligation to develop programs where resources are sufficient to ensure quality. In addition, the institution, in partnership with the communities it serves, must provide straightforward information to appropriate decision makers about the resources required to maintain a quality program.

Organization of the Curriculum

Working under the direction of the appropriate administrative leaders, it is the responsibility of the teaching faculty and academic staff to design, monitor, and evaluate the specific associate degree programs offered by the institution. This process should involve consultation with others, both inside and outside

BEST COPY

the institution. The associate degree program links learning that has gone before with learning that will come after. Therefore, those concerned with framing the associate degree requirements must not approach the task in isolation. Full attention must be given to continuity in learning, as well as to the proficiencies required for an individual to achieve career satisfaction. Community college leaders are encouraged to maintain a continuing dialogue with high school administrators and faculty, as well as with college and university decision makers, with regard to program scope and sequence. The student should experience little or no loss of continuity, or loss of credits, when moving from one level of education to another.

The resulting associate degree program should consist of a coherent and tightly knit sequence of courses capped by an evaluation process that measures the outcomes of the learning process, either at the course level, comprehensively, or both. All degree programs must include the opportunity for the student to demonstrate proficiency in the use of language and computation, for whatever their career goals, students will be called upon to exercise competence in these areas.

In addition, all associate degree programs should reflect those characteristics that help define what constitutes an educated person. Such characteristics include a level of general education that enables the individual to understand and appreciate his/her culture and environment; the development of a system of personal values based on accepted ethics that lead to civic and social responsibility; and the attainment of skills in analysis, communication, quantification, and synthesis necessary for further growth as a lifespan learner and a productive member of society. It is understood that not all of these elements are attained fully through organized courses, but that the intellectual and social climate of the institution and the variety of other educational activities engaged in by students may play an important part. It is incumbent upon the institution to develop appropriate procedures to assess required learning gained outside the formal course structure.

The Associate in Arts and Associate in Science Degrees

These degrees primarily prepare the student to transfer to an upper-division baccalaureate degree program. Programs leading to these degrees are similar in nature. The general trend has been to offer the associate in science degree to students who wish to major in engineering, agriculture, or the sciences with heavy undergraduate requirements in mathematics and science. The associate in arts degree gives emphasis to those majoring in the social sciences, humanities, arts, and similar subjects. However, it should be noted that the distinction between the two degrees and the eventual baccalaureate major has become somewhat blurred in recent years. Students awarded associate in arts or associate in science degrees should be accepted as junior level transfers in baccalaureate degree granting institutions.

Associate in Applied Science Degree

The second type of degree program is designed to lead the individual directly to employment in a specific career. While the titles given these degrees vary considerably among community, technical, and junior colleges, the most common title is associate in applied science. Other titles are used associate in business, associate in data processing, or other specific occupations, and associate in applied arts and sci-

ences. It should be noted that the number of degrees awarded in these occupational areas has been increasing in the last two decades. In some instances, particularly in the health related fields, the degree is a prerequisite for taking a licensing examination. Some institutions belong to voluntary specialized accrediting agencies that set qualitative and quantitative degree standards for their programs. Although the objective of the associate in applied science degree is to enhance employment opportunities, some baccalaureate degree granting institutions have developed upper division programs to recognize this degree for transfer of credits. This trend is applauded and encouraged.

Associate Degree Titles

In recent years there has been a proliferation of titles of associate degrees. This has been true especially in occupational areas where some institutions offer many different degrees in specific technologies. In an attempt to reduce the number of these degrees and to avoid confusion as to the level of academic achievement attained, it is highly recommended that:

(a) The titles associate in arts and associate in science degrees be used without further designation.

(b) The associate in applied science degree may have additional designations to denote special fields of study such as nursing, computer technology, or law enforcement.

(c) For all associate degrees the transcript of a student should reveal the exact nature of the program completed and whether courses are recommended for transfer to baccalaureate degree programs.

(d) The names or designations used for associate degrees be limited to the above three titles.

Guidelines for the Evaluation of Programs

Many factors may enter into the evaluation of associate degree programs. The most basic and important elements relate to the objectives the institution itself has set for the degree program. Does the program, for example, provide the foundation in general education the institution has set as a goal? Does the program provide students with the competencies required to compete successfully in a career role? The evaluation of degree programs should create a continuing dialogue within the institution concerning associate degree quality and the relative success of the college's graduates. Creative faculties will find many effective ways of assessing their degree programs. The systematic followup of the college's graduates must not be overlooked as a necessary evaluation tool.

Ideally, the evaluation of associate degree programs in community, technical, and junior colleges should be accomplished by the institutions themselves and not by state or federal agencies. Regional accrediting associations serve as self-regulatory bodies to help institutions monitor and evaluate the quality of their associate degree programs. In order that accountability for such evaluations may be clearly understood, institutions should designate institution-wide oversight bodies to evaluate the continuing balance and quality of associate degree programs.

Looking Ahead

This policy statement is limited to the associate degree, thus leaving unexamined a host of other important elements of the community, technical, and junior college mission. These institutions are attended by many individuals for valid reasons other

BEST COPY

than obtaining a degree. Continuing education and noncredit courses are also reaffirmed as important to the mission of community, technical, and junior colleges. Nothing in this policy statement should be interpreted as discouraging colleges from admitting students who do not have degree objectives to all courses for which they are qualified and from which they will benefit.

While this policy statement is limited to a definition of the associate degree, it is recognized that further work should be pursued to define other community college outcome measures. Such study is important to the future of community, technical, and junior colleges, particularly as they attempt to influence funding agencies and legislators, and to meet a great diversity of individual human need.

References

Task Force on Educational Credits and Credentials, American Council on Education, *Recommendations on Credentialing Educational Accomplishment* (1978). Out of print.

Leslie Koltai, *Redefining the Associate Degree* (American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 1984). Available from Publisher Services, 80 S. Early Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22304; $5 per copy.

Adopted by the AACJC Board of Directors July 7, 1984

Supplement to the *AACJC Letter* No. 104, August 7, 1984

APPENDIX C

TASK FORCE ON ACADEMIC QUALITY

Roster of Members
by
Subcommittee Assignments

BA Appropriate Courses

Phil Hartley
Associate Professor, Psychology
Chaffey College

Jonnah J. Laroche, Member
Board of Governors
Allan Hancock College Instructor

AA Appropriate Courses

Joseph M. Zagorski, Chairperson

Milton Bard
Instructor
Hartnell College

David Bender, Jr.
Trustee
Ventura County Community College District

Phil Hartley
Associate Professor, Psychology
Chaffey College

James C. Wyatt
Vice Chancellor
San Mateo County Community College District

Joseph M. Zagorski
Vice President
Instructional and Student Services
Mt. San Antonio College

Larry Miller
Instructor
Foothill College

Remedial Issues

Jonnah J. Laroche, Chairperson

Wallace Albertson
Trustee
Los Angeles Community College District

Carole Reed
Student
Sacramento City College

Philip Borst
President
Fullerton College

Joe Cortez
Instructor
Los Angeles Trade-Technical College

Annette Hayes
Director, Vocational Education
Saddleback Community College

Jonnah J. Laroche, Member
Board of Governors
Allan Hancock College Instructor

Rosa Perez
Vice President, Student Services
City College of San Francisco

Olive P. Scott
Vice President, Instructional Services
Cerritos College

BEST COPY

Matriculation

Alfred P. Fernandez, Chairperson

David E. Brown
Trustee
Los Rios Community College District

Dr. Margaret Dominici
Dean of Admissions and Records
Shasta College

John McFarland
Instructor
Sierra College

Dr. Richard D. Yeo
Executive Dean
Chabot College

Kathy Neal
Member
Board of Governors

Dr. Carmen Decker, President
California Community Colleges
Academic Senate
Cypress College Instructor

Loren Irwin
Dean of Student Personnel Services
Merced College

David Pinuelas
Student Body President
Fresno City College

Dr. Alfred P. Fernandez
Chancellor
Ventura County Community College District

Agnes C. Robinson
Vice President
Board of Governors

Jane Tolmach
(Alternate for Ms. Robinson and Ms. Neal)
Member
Board of Governors

Chancellor's Staff

Gus Guichard
Executive Vice Chancellor
California Community Colleges

Ron Dyste, Administrator
Student Services and Specially Funded Programs
California Community Colleges

Dr. Ronn Farland, Administrator
Board of Governors Special Projects
California Community Colleges

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
8118 Math-Sciences Building
University of California
Los Angeles, California 90024

FEB 22 1985

BEST COPY